



Expressing Gratitude

"One step at a time. You'll get there."



What is Gratitude?



Gratitude is the feeling of warmth you feel when you appreciate someone or something. You can express gratitude about lots of things in your life!



These include gifts given to you, the people you have in your life, your breakfast this morning, the chill of the breeze as you sipped on your tea or coffee in the afternoon - anything that gives you a **warm fuzzy feeling of appreciation.**



Gratitude is a wonderful way to access appreciation in your life - it can switch the mundane into the magical. Additionally, gratitude does not need to be limited to experiences, things, or people - it can also be **extended to yourself.**



You can aim to be grateful to your body and to your mind for carrying you through a pandemic – **you're here and you're trying your best!**

You've faced challenges and you're getting through it.





"Toxic Positivity"



Reflecting on your life and trying to find things you are grateful for is a good start. You could **acknowledge the negatives** while curiously looking at some of the experiences you are grateful for. Reflection is about realistic **acknowledgement and acceptance** – it could be about anything – it could be about putting yourself out there and trying to date even though you had a bad break-up and **acknowledging** how challenging that was for you **but also being proud** of yourself for trying!

On the other hand, if we were to ignore the negative emotions we feel – this might be a sign of *toxic positivity* – where you ignore or unhealthily suppress the negative emotions that you have felt and only focus on the positives. Having **negative emotions is a part of the human experience** and ignoring these emotions would be moving you away from acceptance and towards suppression.

For example – You would tell yourself that the break-up you experienced wasn't that bad (dismissing your feelings) and that you don't need to waste any more time thinking about these negative feelings.







How Gratitude helps




Gratitude is linked to high levels of **well-being**. People who are grateful experience more **hopefulness, joy, and love**. In addition to this, gratitude increases feelings of social support and decreases feelings of stress and depression.




Higher levels of gratitude are also linked to spiritual well-being and sleep quality, as well as **increased social connection and better coping skills**. Feeling grateful is also linked with higher levels of trust and empathy with other human beings. When people experience gratitude, they tend to empathize more, and this promotes the formation and maintenance of relationships. Gratitude also promotes social inclusiveness!



Research has also found that there is a negative link between gratitude and antisocial behaviour in adolescents, as well as a negative relationship between gratitude and self-blame, substance use, and denial.



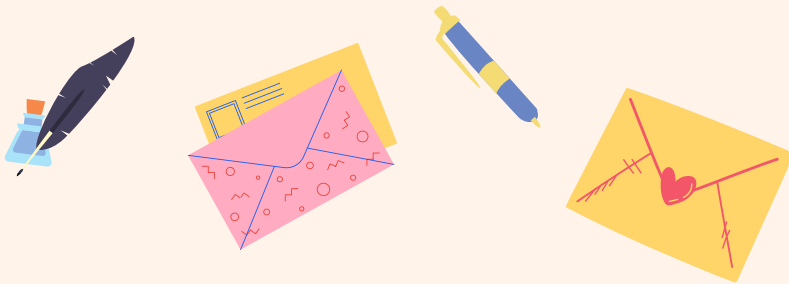
Other benefits of gratitude includes feelings of **connection, satisfaction, and commitment** in friendships and romantic relationships.



Practising Gratitude

Practising gratitude improves your physical health as well - people who show more gratitude report fewer aches and pains. Gratitude has many benefits - so how can you practise expressing gratitude?

One method is to **write a letter of gratitude to someone** - research shows that a gratitude letter can bring about **enhanced levels of life satisfaction and happiness**.



So, how should you write a gratitude letter?

Think of **someone that you should thank**: a friend or colleague or the cashier you see everyday when buying a coffee. Write them a letter. Tell them **in detail** how they affect your life, how they have helped you, and **how you appreciate them**. It does not matter how much time has passed since that person did something for you. You could start with "**Hey you! I just thought about the nice thing you did and I wanted to say thanks!**". You don't actually have to send them this letter if you don't want to - but writing it would help you express your gratitude.



🌿 A Gratitude Journal 🌿



A Gratitude Journal is a place where you **share your thoughts** for a few minutes - it can be done daily or weekly, and it can be done at any time of the day. A gratitude journal keeps track of **all the good things** in life!



It might be daunting to think about starting a whole new journal and committing to it - but it's less scary if you look at it as **an activity that would take only a few minutes of your time**. You can use a notebook, a journal, a piece of paper, or use an app on your phone or a word document!



Once you have your journal or app ready - start writing things down that you appreciate:

Baked a great batch of cookies?

Write it down!

A dog passed you by on the street and you got to pet them?

Write it down!

Received a hug from a friend when you really needed it?

Definitely write it down!



Journaling Prompts



Find out **what works for you** - would you like to reflect a little bit every day? Or would you like to reflect on the past week every Friday? Stick to what works!



Once you start on your gratitude journal, here are a few prompts to keep you going. Feel free to add your own twists since **this is about you and what you appreciate.**



What are you grateful for today?

Who was **kind** to you today?

What made you think "oh that smells great!" today?

Recall a **cherished experience.**



List out three things, people, or experiences you find calming.

Think of an instance where someone **brightened up your day.**

Take a moment to think about what inspires you.

Recall a time you **felt loved.**



List the talents and unique attributes you've been blessed with.

Think of a piece of art (book, movie, song, etc) that you enjoy thoroughly.



Look back at some of the hurdles you have had to navigate and **be proud of yourself.**

Think of what brings you comfort.



Journaling about what you are grateful for will become easier the more you practice it - **believe in yourself!**

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